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ABSTRACT

A relatively new personality test entitled the FIRO-B was administered to 57 full-time Counseling Majors in an effort to determine whether these persons could be characterized in terms of affection and leadership variables. Results showed that these persons were characteristically high in their need and expression of affection and that they were democratic leaders. (Author)

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AFFECTION AND LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS ENTERING A COUNSELING PROGRAM; A MOVEMENT TOWARD ASSESSMENT

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AFFECTION AND LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS
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A MOVEMENT TOWARD ASSESSMENT

James S. Bailey

Counselor Educators have wondered as to what kinds of persons gravitate toward counseling programs. If such information were available it would be beneficial in such areas as curriculum development and selection of candidates.

A study was undertaken at Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville, Missouri, during the 1973-74 academic year in order to arrive at some determination concerning the characteristics of affection and leadership which are possessed by students as they begin their course of study toward completion of a Masters level degree in Counseling and Guidance.

HYPOTHESES:

I. It was hypothesized that persons entering a counseling program would be characterized as having a high need to be deeply associated with other persons.

II. Further it was hypothesized that persons entering a counseling program would be most comfortable in exercising democratic leadership.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Affection - The need for deep emotional involvement with another person. (Ryan, 1970)

Democratic Leadership - (Matcher) That leadership which is expressed by a person who is capable of making decisions and taking responsibility,

but who wants reassurance and support from others while he is doing so. He prefers to share an area of responsiblity, rather than do it alone. (Ryan, 1970)

TEST INSTRUMENT:

The test instrument which was used was the FIRO-B (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation - Behavior). It is a 54 item questionnaire which measures a person's characteristic behavior toward other people in the areas of inclusion, control and affection. It is designed not only to measure individual characteristics but also to assess relationships between people, such as compatibility (Schutz, 1967). (The FIRO-B comprises six scales expressed and wanted behavior in the three areas of inclusion control and affection)(e^1, W^1: e^c, W^c: e^A, W^A) For information concerning reliability and validity of this instrument the reader is referred to The FIRO Scales Manual, by William C. Schutz, Ph.D.

It was determined that the two hypotheses chosen for the study would be tested using the following scales of the FIRO-B.

H_1 - expressed affection (e^A) and wanted affection (W^A)

H_2 - expressed control (e^c) and wanted control (W^c)

The highest score in any one scale of the FIRO-B is 9 and the lowest score is 0. In interpreting the score on each scale the exact position of the score within the 0-9 range must be noted. The intensity of the score modifies the strength and applicability of the described behavior in the following formula:

0-1 - extremely low; the negative behavior described will have a compulsive quality.

2-3 - low scores; the negative behavior will be noticeably characteristic of the person.

4-5 - borderline scores

6-7 - high scores; the positive behavior will be noticeably characteristic of the person

8-9 - extremely high - the positive behavior will have a compulsive quality to it. (Ryan, 1970)

METHOD

POPULATION. The population for this study involved all persons who entered the masters program in Counseling and Guidance at Northeast Missouri StateUniversity for both the Fall semester 1973 and those entering for the Spring semester 1974.

The Fall semester group consisted of 35 persons (20 male and 15 female). These persons were from 22 to 54 years of age and were all college graduates. Their professional work experience after college graduation varied from 0 to 25 years.

The Spring semester group consisted of 21 persons (17 male and 4 female). These personswere from 21 to 33 years of age and were all college graduates. Their professional work experience after college graduation varied from 0 to 8 years.

Hence the entire population consisted of 56 persons. Of these, 37 were male and 19 were female.

PROCEDURE

The entire population was given the FIRO-B at the beginning of the first "Group Procedures" class which they attended. This course is required

to be taken by all full time majors in the Counseling and Guidance program at this university. The tests were then individually scored. After the test results for both groups were so collected, statistics were applied to the scores to establish the median, mean, and mode for the population.

RESULTS

The results of the mean, median, and mode computations which were used to test the two hypotheses involved in the study can be seen in table 1.

TABLE I

	e^C	W^C	e^A	W^A
Mean	3.73	4.51	5.94	6.52
Median	3	4	6	7
Mode	4	3	9	9

H_1 - (expressed and wanted affection) The mean, median, and mode for the scores of e^A and W^A seem to strongly support hypothesis I that students entering the NMSU counseling masters program are characterized as individuals who have and express a high need to have deep personal relationships with others.

H_2 - (expressed and wanted control) The mean, median, and mode for the scores of e^C and W^C give evidence of support for hypothesis II that students entering the NMSU counseling masters program would be most comfortable in exercising leadership in a democratic manner. The FIRO-B labels such persons as "Matchers" and gives them a score of e^C - 4 or 5 and W^C - 4 or 5.

DISCUSSION:

This study gives research credence to the hypothesis that students entering a counseling education program on the masters level are looking for close associations with other persons and are most comfortable with shared responsibility.

The Counselor Education professionals at NMSU find this information most beneficial in a number of ways. First, because these two characteristics of leadership and interpersonal relationships seem to be characteristic of persons entering our program we should and have adjusted our curriculum to encompass a flavor of democratic leadership and many opportunities for close interpersonal interaction. In a questionnaire requesting information from students(N=35) concluding their first semester in this curriculum, 95% of the students expressed strong acceptance of the curricular direction.

Secondly, the Counselor Education faculty agree that students who are entering our program should receive immediate feedback about their prognosis for success in the program and later in the profession of counseling. In futher research we plan to follow up on our majors after they have been in the profession as well as professionals already in the field in order to determine if success in the field correlates positively with the results of this study. With this information we could give new counseling majors some feedback based upon their FIRO-B scores. We feel that there is not sufficient evidence to exclude students on the basis of their FIRO-B scores, but that some basis for student self-evaluation would be immediately available rather than withholding prognostic feedback until the student is in the profession and only then coming to the realization

that he is neither suited for nor happy as a professional counselor.

References:

Ryan, L. R. Clinical Interpretation of the FIRO-B. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1970.

Schultz, W. C. The FIRO Scales Manual. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1967.